

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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R 140430Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9848
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
CHUSMTM DHAHRAN
CSA WASHDC
USCINCEUR
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 4363

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, YE, SA
SUBJECT: MILITARY ASSISTANCE COORDINATION

REF: SECDEF 052022Z

SUMMARY: DAO SANA HAS ASKED THAT REFTEL BE REPEATED TOAMEMBASSY JIDDA AND TO SECSTATE. POINTS IT RAISES ABOUT TRAINING AND LOGISTIC SUPPORT ARE VERY PERTINENT IN THEMSELVES BUT ALSO HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANT PROBLEMS ABOUT COORDINATION US-SAUDI-YAR ARMS SUPPLY. IN THIS CABLE WE REVIEW PROBLEMS, OUTLINES SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND INVITE DISCUSSIONS.

1. QUESTION OF COORDINATION HAS SOME BACKGROUND INEXCHANGES IN SPRING OF 1976 (SEE JIDDA 2620, STATE 090245, JIDDA 2901, SANA 1284, STATE 109812). BASIC PROBLEM IS THAT UNDER AMBIGUOUS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WHICH USG HAS ISSUED AT SAUDI REQUEST IN CASE OF YEMEN ARMS SALES, EMBASSY SANA IS INHIBITED IF NOT BARRED IN RAISING ISSUES OF MILITARY SUPPLY WITH THE YEMENIS.

2. BACKGROUND IS AS FOLLOWS. THE SAUDIS FORMALLY AND IN WRITING REQUESTED THT WE AGREE THAT "ALL THAT PERTAINS TO THE ROLE OF THE YEMENI GOVERNMENT AS A PURCHASING PARTY VIS-A-VIS THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT "BE SUBJECT
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TO PRIOR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE SAUDI AND YEMENI

GOVERNMENTS". EMBASSY SANA OBJECTED THAT THIS LANGUAGE WAS INTENDED TO RESTRICT OUR FREEDOM TO RAISE ISSUES REGARDING MILITARY SUPPLY WITH THE YEMENIS, AND THAT WE SHOULD NOT, THEREFORE, AGREE TO THIS SAUDI REQUEST. THE DEPARTMENT, IN DECIDING THIS ISSUE, APPROVED LANGUAGE WHICH TOLD THE SAUDIS THAT "AS TO THE FORTH POINT OF (SULTAN'S LETTER, THAT IS, THAT THERE WILL BE PRIOR UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE SAUDI SNA DHT YEMENI GOVERNMENTS, THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ANY PARTICULAR PROBLEMS".

3. THIS FORMULATION DOES NOT ADMIT THAT WE AGREE TO ANY RESTRICTION ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE YEMENIS. NONETHELESS, WHATEVER THE LEGAL INTERPRETATION MAY BE OF THIS LANGUAGE, WE THINK THE SAUDIS BELIEVE THAT OUR REPLY WAS AN ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR REQUEST. IN ANY CASE, THE SAUDI MILITARY MISSION HERE HAS ASKED US REPEATEDLY NOT RPT NOT TO DISCUSS DETAILS OF THE MILITARY SUPPLY PROGRAM WITH YEMENIS AND WE HAVE AGREED, PREFERRING TO DEFER TO THE OBVIOUS SAUDI DESIRE TO RUN THIS PROGRAM THEMSELVES.

4. THIS PUTS A VERY HIGH PREMIUM ON COORDINATION BETWEEN THE SAUDIS AND OURSELVES. AT THIS MEMENT, HOWEVER, WE DO NOT HAVE THE KIND OF INFORMATION AND BROAD SUSTEM OF US-SAUDI CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION WHICH IS GOING TO BE RQUIRED IF THE PROGRAM IS GOING TO SUCCEED.

5. SUADIS IN SANA, WHILE DEFERRING TO RIYADH, HAVE REACTED NEGATIVELY TO US SURVEY TEAM TO EXAMINE LOGISTIC SUPPORT FACILITIES FOR VERY LARGE NUMBER OF TRUCKS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT WHICH ARE BEGINNING TO ARRIVE THIS WEK FROM US AND MAY CONTINUE AT RATE OF ABOUT ONE SHIP A WEEK FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, (WE HAVE, THEREFORE, SAID NOTHING TO YEMENIS ABOUT REFTEL SECDEF SUGGESTION OF SUCH A TEAM.) SAUDIS THEN REVEALED TO US, AFTER SOMREPRESSING, THAT THEY INTEND TO BRING ALL INCOMING US VEHICLES AND OTHER SUPPLIES FROM HODEIDAH TO TWO CANTONMENT AREAS SOMEWHERE NEAR SANA DND KEEP THEM THERE FOR INDEFINITE PERIOD. NO YAR MILITARY WILL BE INVOLVED -- ONLY PORT OFFICIALS. THEY HAVE ALSO JUST NOW TOLD US THAT THEY CONFIDENTIAL

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HAVE "500" YEMENI MILITARY MEN IN TRAINING OF DIFFERENT BUT UNSPECIFIED SORTS IN KINGDOM. PRESUMABLY THE RETURN OF THESE MEN WILL TRIGGER REORGANIZATION OF SOME YEMENI UNITS AND RELEASE OF US EQUIPMENT. WE DON'T REALLY KNOW, HOWEVER.

6. WE WOULD BE MOST UNWILLING TO ALLOW DISCLOSURE OF OUR CONCERN ABOUT SAUDI PLANNING TO AFFECT OUR GROWING

AND CAREFULLY NURTURED RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL SAUDIS. THREE OF THESE MEN -- MILITARY ATTACHE HUDDAYAN, AID COORDINATOR B/GEN DHAHIRI AND MILITARY MISSION CHIEF COL. SHUWAYIL -- APPEAR VERY COMPETENT. THEY CLAIM TO BE UNDER SHORT TETHER FROM RIYADH IN DEALINGS WITH US. BUT PROFESS PERSONALLY TO WANT TO CONSULT FULLY AND CLOSELY WITH US, AND WE ARE GRADUALLY WORKING THIS OUT.

7. NEVERTHELESS, WE THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO OPEN NEW CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION WITH SAUDIS THROUGH CHUSMTM AND AMEMBASSY JIDDA. SECDEF REFTEL PROPOSES DISCUSSIONS ON LOGISTICS SUPPORT. THAT IS USEFUL, PARTICULARLY AS FIRST STEP, BUT DISCUSSIONS COULD INCLUDE OTHER SUBJECTS, SUCH AS TRAINING AND SUPPORT (AS SECDEF MSG AND SANA MSGS HAVE PREVIOUSLY SUGGESTED), OVERALL MILITARY IMPACT PROGRAM, SCHEDULE AND MEANS OF RE-ORGANIZING YEMENI UNITS FROM SOVIET TO US MODELS, AND FOLLOW-ON OR ANCILLARY (READ FRENCH) EQUIPMENT PURCHASES.

8. IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN DCM RANSOM AND AMBASSADOR PORTER IN FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER 1976, THIS PROBLEM WAS DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH AND AMBASSADOR PORTER PROPOSED A FRAMEWORK AND PHILOSOPHY FOR DEALING WITH POLITICAL-MILITARY ASPECTS OF YEMEN ARMS SUPPLY PROGRAM. AS YEMEN PROGRAM IS UNIQUE IN WORLD -- TURNING OVER US ARMS TO THIRD COUNTRY IN RECIPIENT COUNTRY TERRITORY -- AND AS SOVIETS HAVE 136-MAN MILITARY MISSION WAITING TO STEP IN IF US-SAUDI PROGRAM FALLS ON ITS FACE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE FULL USE OF COORDINATION MEASURES.

9. AMBASSADOR PORTER HAS MADE TELLING POINT IN SAYING THAT MAJOR PROBLEMS SHOULD BE SOLVED BETWEEN SAUDIS AND YEMENIS, WITHOUT OUR GETTING OUT IN FRONT, AND THAT

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US SHOULD NOT GET BETWEEN TWO ARAB FRIENDS IN DISPUTE, HE SUGGESTS -- AND WE FULLY AGREE -- THAT US ROLE IN MAJOR PROBLEMS SHOULD BE SOLVED AFTER AL-HAMDI HAS APPROACHED SAUDIS AND US, AND SHOULD THEN BE CONFINED TO LOW-KEY US-SAUDI DISCUSSIONS AT HIGH LEVEL.

10. ONLY PROBLEM WE SEE WITH ABOVE PROCEDURE IS THAT IT MIGHT LEAVE MANY TECHNICAL POINTS WITH NO GOOD VENUE FOR DISCUSSIONS. WE WOULD HOPE, THEREFORE, THAT ANOTHER, LOWER-LEVEL CHANNEL COULD BE OPENED TO MODA, BOTH THROUGH POLITICAL/MILITARY SECTION OF EMBASSY JIDDA, AND THROUGH CHUSMTM. IT MIGHT THUS BE POSSIBLE TO NIP SOME PROBLEMS IN THE BUD. SUGGESTION OF AN ANNUAL OR EIGHTEEN-MONTH US-SAUDI REVIEW OF PROGRAM, WITH FORMAL AGENDA AND BRIEF MEETING, MIGHT BE GOOD IDEA TOO, IN OUR

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VIEW. WE THINK THAT IN THIS WAY CONSULTATION CAN BE
IMPROVED ALONG WITH COORDINATION, AND WE CAN HELP
SAUDIS WITHOUT GETTING DEEPLY INVOLVED OURSELVES AND
WITHOUT TAKING LIMELIGHT FROM SAUDIS.

11. SAUDIS HAVE EXCELLENT PROGRAM HERE, ONE WHICH
COULD DISPLACE SOVIETS AND CEMENT GOOD RELATIONS WITH
STABLE GOVERNMENT IN YEMEN. THIS WOULD BE IN SHARP
CONTRAST WITH 60S WHEN YEMEN WAS BASE FOR HOSTILE
PROPAGANDA AND POSED MILITARY THREAT AGAINST KINGDOM.
IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO HELP SAUDIS ACHIEVE THEIR NEW
GOALS IN YEMEN. IN PARTICULAR WE DO NOT WANT TO SEE
PROGRAM FOUNDER ON SAUDI INEXPERIENCE IN MILITARY
SUPPLY RELATIONSHIPS. (SAUDIS PAY FOR SEVERAL MILI-
TARY PROGRAMS BUT IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING
THAT YEMEN PROGRAM IS ONLY ONE THEY DIRECTLY ADMIN-
ISTER.)

12. APPRECIATE SECDEF CABLE UNDER REFERENCE PROBABLY
WAS NOT INTENDED TO ELICIT THIS KIND OF RESPONSE.
NEVERTHELESS, IT IS CONVENIENT PEG ON WHICH TO HANG
LARGER ISSUES OF ADMINISTRATION OF MILITARY SUPPLY PRO-
GRAM IN YEMEN IN EFFORT TO FLAG POTENTIALLY SERIOUS
PROBLEMS IN MONTHS AHEAD. WE WOULD LIKE TO ELICIT DIS-
CUSSION OF THIS ISSUE.

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